

PRO-LIFE 101

SESSION 4:
PERMISSION-BASED CARE & CONFIDENTIALITY

TAKEN FROM

making LIFE
DISCIPLES™

*Equipping the Church to offer compassion, hope, help,
and discipleship to women and men considering abortion.*

PERMISSION-BASED CARE

A trained Life Disciple guides the woman or man facing a pregnancy decision through the initial meeting, seeking to understand their unique challenges, answering their questions, and offering relevant services. The Life Disciple asks the person's permission before presenting educational information, such as fetal development, abortion procedures and risks, adoption, and parenting. Life Disciples never manipulate or present images that are simply intended to shock or disturb someone. If anyone refuses information or does not want to discuss a specific topic, the Life Disciple should always respect that decision.

Not only is asking permission a sound and caring practice, but it also significantly reduces the likelihood that a woman or man facing a pregnancy decision could perceive the Life Disciple's behavior as adding to any trauma or emotional distress they may feel during an already difficult time. Disregard for a person's emotional state, sharing graphic/disturbing information without consent, or using manipulative language in presenting information about options is always inappropriate.

Sometimes a simple "yes or no" question is the best way to ask permission. For example, you might ask the woman or man, "Are you okay if we watch this short video of a physician explaining the abortion procedure?" or "I have some images of fetal development. Would you be interested in seeing what a fetus looks like at 8 weeks in the womb?" If the person says no, you should move on. But if he or she says yes, you have permission to continue. Either way, you have shown respect by asking a simple, yet all-important, question.

Life Disciples must always be upfront and truthful about the services the church provides, as well as the services *they do not* provide. No one should ever intentionally be misled.

It is feasible that some women or men facing a pregnancy decision may ask if a church can help them get an abortion; you must be upfront in letting the woman or man know that your church does not refer people for abortions, nor does it facilitate an abortion in any way.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Maintaining a commitment to confidentiality is foundational to your ministry work as a Life Disciple.²¹ As a result, women and men facing pregnancy decisions will come to trust you. They must have confidence that they can share details of their lives without concern or fear that their parents, partners, friends, or anyone else may learn what they share with you.

To maintain confidentiality, follow these guidelines:

- **Never share or provide information about those you serve to anyone outside the *Making Life Disciples* ministry leadership. This includes your spouse, a close friend, or other confidantes, as well as that person's family or friends, doctor's offices and community organizations.** This prohibition includes confirming or disclosing whether or not a specific person is, or ever has been, served by a Life Disciple at your church.
- **When asking others to pray for a woman or man facing a pregnancy decision (i.e. making a prayer request), do not share information that could identify the person.** Keep the request as general as possible. An example of such a general request is: "I know a woman who is facing a pregnancy decision and thinks abortion is her only option. Please pray for her." Another example is: "I am struggling after learning that a woman I served as a Life Disciple chose to have an abortion. Please pray for me."

If you are not sure whether or not to disclose information about those you serve, consult your *Making Life Disciples* ministry leader, who will know your church's policies regarding the disclosure of information. You may encounter a situation that calls for the disclosure of sensitive information, and you may be legally bound to disclose the information shared by a woman or man you are serving with a legal entity (e.g. they disclose facts about child abuse, a threat to commit suicide, or a court issues a subpoena for the release of information), **but it's important you do so *only* under the direction of your church's leadership.**

ENDNOTES: SESSION 1

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Cover design by Brian Gage, Coldwater Media, copyright © by Care Net.
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ISBN: 978-0-9972285-0-2

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